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'Now the God of Peace'

BY EDWIN McNEILL POTEAT

IT has never been easy to be God. Those who aspire to the status of divinity either lack proper historical perspective, for it is a longtime business, or are scornful of serenity. The Olympian calm of which poets write is no prerequisite of deity. If the ratio of responsibility to a serene spirit is the same with God as it is with men, the rewards of his efforts are not to be computed in quietness and rest. To be sure, looking at the labors of God from the low level of human striving, there must be times when there is a moderation of the divine tempo. God rested once, says the ancient record; it was after six days of cosmic construction. There is no record to support the notion that he has rested since—though such matters are beyond the limits of our understanding. If however there may have been moments of respite, there surely have been moments of great strain.

Without being committed to theological discussion by the point, one may ask how it must feel to be the God of Peace when the world of his concern is worshiping the god of war. It is as though a promising child, long nurtured by a wise and devoted father, should suddenly in a caprice of temper deny his true sire and move into the home of a stupid and wicked man. If a father's heart would break at such infidelity, what of the heart of God in these bruising hours?

But the God of Peace is not to be set aside quite so completely as some think. If, as the God of Peace, he is ranged on the side of the appeasers—for appeasers means *ap-peacers*—he is not banished wholly from the minds of the makers of war. He insinuates himself into words and acts in a way that often compromises the forthrightness of one's vehemence. Mr. Churchill, reporting on the Atlantic rendezvous, said: "Every effort will be made to secure a peaceful settlement." He was speaking of Japan. And Mr. Shirer on September 7, 1939, wrote: "Have heard much talk today about peace." These are strange sources for such talk and

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those responsible for the quotations are not appeasers, surely. Is it possible that the recurrence of the word "peace" is an intimation of the pressure of the God of Peace upon life, all the time, and at every point?

If this suggestion is allowed, it becomes more than a suggestion. It becomes in a very real sense an obligation upon those who worship the God of Peace, even while they handle the instruments of Ares. There are many questions to be raised about the direct action of the church in our times. It is hardly wise or prudent for the Body of Christ to seek to sabotage or even subvert a national effort that seems supported by something like a majority of our people. But a recognition of that serves only to enforce a more difficult obligation: keeping fresh and living the sense of God as the God of Peace in the experience of conflict. Hitler is not forever; God is. Therefore we must keep the sensitive needle of the soul fixed on the invariable magnetic pole of God. Otherwise we are lost. By way of getting one's soul's bearings, it is profitable to turn to certain familiar uses of the phrase, "the God of Peace," as it occurs in the New Testament. Twice Paul so describes him; once the reference is in the letter to the Hebrews. In no case was the phrase written in an Eden of isolation and security. On the contrary! The point is that in all three cases the phrase sets forth realistically what happens when one is oriented to the God of Peace, no matter how tranquil or tortured the times may be.

I

"The God of Peace be with you": the citation is Romans 15:13, and suggests simply the God of Peace as Companion. It is an ancient and tried idea—fellowship with God. Enoch walked with him, and Moses spoke with him face to face as to a familiar friend; but it was never a universal experience. None were conscious of such ineffable companionship all the time, and most never knew it at all. God was to most of his people remote, mysterious, terrible. There were some to whom he was a vocation; they dared his presence and transmitted his words. Prophets they were called; and like him whom they were thought to know intimately, they often eschewed the company of their fellows. There was instrumental as well as religious value in their isolation.

It was a real step forward in the religious apprehensions of the race when the company of God was thought desirable and possible for all men; that the calling of all was to the divine fellowship within which was to be found fulfillment for each. Foretold by the ancients, it was reaffirmed by Jesus who made it the secret of his joy and the monitor of his actions. But it was not to be an arbitrary companionship. "He that keepeth his commandment dwelleth in him, and he in him." It was conditioned on one's willingness to share the will of the God of Peace. Without that commitment the companionship was impossible; with it, the experience became so intimate and real as to be equivalent to a fusion of the human and divine spirits.

Perhaps we are wistful for the easy sainthood of the ancients. It was true then. Is it now? We *must* go along with a national program; *may* we go along with the God of Peace too? Each will give his own reply in terms of many different factors. But this much is true: whether the reply be that of the pacifist or the man who in sorrow commits himself to armed combat, the experience of the God of Peace as companion will be the only creative and cohesive force that is available against personal and social disintegration.

May the God of Peace be with us!

II

"The God of Peace sanctify you wholly." Here the reference is in First Thessalonians 5:23, and suggests the God of Peace as Cleansing. This also is an old and tried idea. From his earliest moment of self-consciousness man has been aware of his inadequacy, and his failures have tainted his spirit with frustration or despair. Man's effort to shake off this blight has produced heroism and cowardice—the one in his matchless self-mortifications, the other in his flight from himself. And, as in the case with the idea of God as Companion, the idea of God as Cleansing marked a forward step in the religious understanding of life. But the cleansing power of God was not fortuitous. The vision of Isaiah began in rapture, continued in penitence and ended in consecration. He could not share the cleansing of God until he was dissociated from the company of a people of unclean lips. The companionship that followed continued the process that Isaiah's self-separation had begun.

This is no strange notion—God as a power of cleansing. The best safeguard against evil is a good and resolute friend. "Evil companions corrupt good manners." It is also true the other way about. By the same process and in closer ratio the companionship of the God of Peace should be the surest cleansing. He accompanies in order to cleanse; he cleanses in order to accompany. "Now ye are clean," said Jesus to those who had been his intimates, "by the word which I have spoken unto you."

Once again we ask, somewhat in dismay, whether such an experience is to be had today. Whatever may be one's judgment about the present war, all men feel that it has soiled every fair and wholesome thing. What is there that does not show the smirch of its foul fingers? What will there be left that is not defiled when it is over? And what shall assoil this vast uncleanness? The hatreds and passions, the lies and injustices, the prides and stupidities? No god of vindictiveness, no meticulous deity of sharp, hard justice will cleanse the world. These things that sully the world of individuals and institutions, states and societies, ideas and feelings, will be purged only by the God of Peace. No exigency of the moment must make us forget that eternal truth or palsy the hands that hold it aloft!

May the God of Peace sanctify us wholly.

III

"May the God of Peace make you perfect in every good work to do his will." Here the familiar word

comes from Hebrews 13:21, and suggests the God of Peace as Completion. Made perfect in every good work; it is a superlative aim. And yet, once again, it is an idea that came to fruition at a fairly early time in the life of the spirit. Whether life be base or noble, there is tragedy in the fact of its brevity. It is the unfinished aspect of life that dispirits. In time the idea of immortality that began in a hope for mere continuity was elevated to a higher hope for completion. For completion is somehow not possible in time. Whether it is possible within eternity we do not know, but it is an instinct that may be as true as it is universal that leads to the idea that the final fullness of

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life will come to those whose fellowship with the God of Peace in time is to be completed with him in eternity.

Until that comes to pass, however, it is a poor consolation to offer to the broken life of the present world. The idea of the completion of life seems so futile today with millions of young lives cruelly shortened and many of the mature energies of older men and enterprises spent in destruction.

> How beautiful the universe
> Today and long years after
> Had we not throttled at their source
> A million springs of laughter!

And yet the formula contained in our third phrase suggests the way in which the God of Peace offers his completion to our aborted or deferred efforts. "Make you perfect *in every good work to do his will*"—that is the way it is set forth. This is a consoling word to those whose utter devotion to the way of non-violence in a violent world leads them sometimes to fear the futility of their great faith. For does it not insist that in every good work that does his will, they will be made perfect?

Here again, no matter what one thinks of the war, the Christian must seek to find personal, social and political completeness within the will of the God of Peace. To let go of that faith is to doom to incompleteness the efforts to bring into being a new order after the present madness is spent. May the God of Peace make us perfect in every good work to do his will!

This threefold experience of the God of Peace must be made available during just such times as these, and to this task the church must tirelessly give itself. It is not beyond the power of God to make possible his companionship, his cleansing and his completion to pacifist and non-pacifist alike. To the extent therefore to which we as individuals and as a church serve this need, we shall be meeting the day's most urgent demand. Alfred Noyes wrote:

> In the cool of the evening when the soft sweet shadows lengthen,
> When the wanderers turn homeward and the weary have their will,
> When the censers of the roses o'er the forest aisles are shaken,
> I can hear Him as He comes across the dark green hill.

Can I? If the dark green hill be the gentle rise in a country lane, or a camouflaged pill-box where I await the coming of an enemy? At all costs, whatever, I must hear *him*.

There are some who call this sort of thing unrealistic. Listen: there is nothing so realistic in the universe as the God of Peace; and nothing so realistic as his companionship, cleansing and completion. Besides these much of our experience seems unreal and unimportant. We shall therefore seek the will and speak the word of the God of Peace in these days. This means that we shall look at the world's torture and pain from the standpoint of the God of Peace. If we have known him in the light, we shall be able to descry his outline and feel his presence even in the darkness. Only thus, we believe, will we be able to mediate God's will to a world that will, soon or late, cry out again for the companionship, the cleansing and the completeness of the God which in these tumultuous years it has momentarily forgot.

Thus also will we give timeliness to Shirer's brief word: "Today I have heard much talk of peace," and extension to Churchill's promise: "Every effort will be made to secure a peaceful settlement." What else is needed in a world hungry for companionship, ready for cleansing, and needful of completion?

CHRISTIANITY'S sacred emblem is not a cradle; nor is it a scepter; nor is it a crown. It is a cross. That cross means that Christ died for sinners, and that through faith in him we have forgiveness and life eternal. CLARENCE E. MACARTNEY.

Life's Ultimate Choice

By Walter Dudley Cavert

If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. Daniel 3:16, 17.

THOMAS CARLYLE was never tired of insisting that the ultimate question which every person is obliged to answer is, "Wilt thou be a hero or a coward?" Earnest people in every generation have been forced to face that issue but it comes with special emphasis in our own day. We will be strengthened for the high choice by reminding ourselves of some of the stalwart souls of the past who persisted in obeying God rather than men.

Everyone remembers the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, for it is one of the great hero tales of all literature. Nebuchadnezzar had set up a golden image on the plain of Dura and commanded all his subjects to bow down before it. The young Jewish exiles refused to comply with the royal edict. To have made obeisance to such an object would have been a denial of the faith of their fathers and a violation of the innermost sanctity of their souls. Reared in religious homes, taught from earliest childhood to give their supreme allegiance to God, they abhorred the thought of performing any act of reverence before an image made by the hands of men. Haled before the king and threatened with a cruel death unless they obeyed the decree, they made the unflinching reply recorded in our text.

Life, for the three young heroes, had an absolute significance that did not permit any compromise. They knew no easygoing moral relativity that justified the means by the end. Physical existence to them was a minor matter compared to loyalty to their deepest convictions. They were among the earliest men on record who refused to allow a totalitarian state to become the dictator of their consciences. Confident in the protecting care of God, they looked the crisis in the face and were not dismayed. They knew that even if there were no God, it would be better to die like heroes than to live like cowards. Although death might conceivably end all, it would be better to be true to the best that they knew and go down to extinction in the consciousness of their own integrity than to preserve their lives as timid weaklings.

The natural tendency of a scientific age is to discount this attitude of moral steadfastness. We see the trial and error method of physical science resulting in marvels of material achievement, and jump to the unwarranted conclusion that all progress is to be made in the same manner. But the trial and error method is calamitous to the soul. The attitude of "I will try anything once" is not the way by which we can prove or disprove our ideals. We can learn truth in the moral and spiritual realm only by committing ourselves to it irrevocably with no thought of turning back. We can never learn whether loyalty to a high standard is justified unless we give ourselves to it wholeheartedly in scorn of consequences. Elbert Hubbard said the martyrs showed a lack of humor in dying for their faith when a slight compromise might have saved them, but the only verification of Christian faith is in betting one's life upon its reality. We can never know whether our religion is worth dying for unless we are actually willing to die for it.

Our religious education fails at its most vital point unless it teaches young people that there are moral laws grounded in the very nature of the universe so that one can never deny or defy them without degrading his character and stultifying his soul. Not until a person understands this basic truth and is willing to go out into the world and stake his life upon it, has he the right to consider himself a mature Christian.

I

Consider some of the simple applications of our text. There is an old proverb with which we are all familiar—"Honesty is the best policy." We cherish the belief that success is synonymous with virtue and that honesty is the key to commercial prosperity. But many a young man has had the fine edge of his idealism blunted against the rough rocks of experience. He starts out in business with high ethical standards but soon sees his competitor earning more money because he has a less sensitive conscience and is willing to stoop to tricky methods. He learns that some of the largest fortunes in America were created by unscrupulous practices and at the same time he sees the possessors of this wealth flattered and fawned upon by the multitude. Little wonder that he concludes that honesty is a noble principle but not the best policy for one who wishes to get ahead in the business world! He decides "realistically" that he must play the game as he sees others playing it.

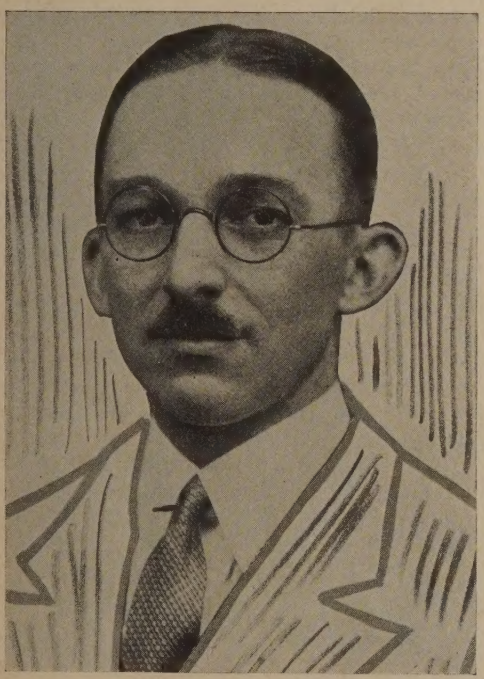
When Jacob Riis was a young man struggling to make his way as a newspaper reporter, he was offered a promising position in the office of one of New York's leading financiers. It meant a larger salary, prospects of rapid advancement and social prestige, all the material opportunities which are so subtly attractive to a young person on the threshold of life. But Riis, through his newspaper work, had already learned some unsavory facts about the magnate's secret methods. He knew that if he became an employee of this man who used questionable means to attain his ends, he could not permanently retain his own integrity. So he chose to remain poor rather than to compromise by sacrificing his honesty.

A similar test comes to everyone who is in business or professional life in the modern world. What if it pays to be dishonest? What if those who resort to subterfuge and chicanery have the best chance of financial success? Have you the moral courage to face the image of gold which is erected in the market place of the twentieth century Babylon and say: "I believe I can succeed by being honest, but if not, I will not worship the image. Rather than accumulate money at

the price of my integrity, I will allow myself to be cast into the fiery furnace of unemployment and poverty."

II

There is another piece of advice which we have often heard—"It pays to tell the truth." How many times have parents and preachers and Sunday school teachers given this or similar advice to young people! Never stoop to prevarication. Let your word be as good as your bond. In every situation tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Then people will respect you and trust you. Your reputation for veracity will ultimately fling open the doors to opportunity and power.



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Yes, but if not! Suppose it is possible to escape from an embarrassing situation by adopting the small boy's definition of a lie, "It is an abomination unto the Lord but an ever present help in time of trouble." What if others are believing a lie and by standing for the truth you will be left to stand alone? What if adherence to the truth means to be criticized and misunderstood? What if it means that the candidate for the ministry may be refused ordination if he fails to subscribe to certain theological formulas but insists on speaking the truth as God has revealed it to his own soul? What if it means that the preacher will be forced out of his pulpit unless he compromises with his inner convictions and makes his message an echo of the words his influential members insist on hearing? What if Hitler is right when he says that the crowd is always gullible and that the one who tells the biggest lie will have the biggest following?

Whenever we are confronted with grave moral and social issues such as are at the forefront of the world today, it becomes costly and dangerous to tell the truth. Have we the stamina to take the attitude of Abraham Lincoln at the Republican state convention in Springfield, Illinois, in 1858? He had been nominated as a candidate for the United States Senate and delivered a carefully prepared speech in which he first used the famous phrase "A house divided against itself cannot stand." Before he delivered the address, he read it to some friends gathered in a hotel room. They all advised him not to make the speech as he had written it. They insisted it would mean political suicide. Lincoln paced up and down the room in meditation. Then he stopped and said: "I have thought a great deal about this matter. I have weighed the question from all angles and am thoroughly convinced that the time has come when it should be uttered. If I must go down because of this speech, then let me go down linked to the truth and in the advocacy of what is just and right." Lincoln lost the election though he afterwards won the presidency, but again and again a similar attitude has resulted in political oblivion.

Does it pay to tell the truth? Not always! It may mean that we alienate our friends, fail to gain the desired promotion, and receive the brickbats instead of the flattery of the multitude. Can we continue to go steadfastly forward, flying the banner of truth, and refusing to do obeisance before the image of falsehood?

III

"Righteousness exalteth a nation" was one of the proverbs of ancient Israel. These words have been used as a text for countless patriotic sermons and have often been quoted as constituting an unerring guide to successful statesmanship. We have preferred to believe that the ruler who directed the steps of his people in paths of righteousness was leading them toward prosperity and power. But today the one who relies upon righteousness as the first line of national defense is in danger of being called sentimental and lacking in realism. Of all the nations in Europe, none have been more fully committed to a program of social justice for their own subjects and of honorable dealing in international relationships than the Scandinavian countries. But what has been their reward? Instead of being exalted they have been laid low. They have been cast into the fiery furnace of invasion and subjugation.

But behold the dictators, how they grow! Starting like tiny mustard seeds, they have become the mightiest trees in the international forest. They have no regard for what were formerly recognized as ethical standards. They liquidate the critics within their own borders and pursue a policy of ruthless aggression toward their neighbors. They hold that the state can do no wrong and that necessity knows no law. So far they have exalted themselves by unrighteousness.

It is our Christian conviction that there is a Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness. It is our faith that the stars fight against Sisera and that the universe is pledged to the final triumph of right over

wrong. God is never defeated but it is obvious that he is often slow in working out his purposes and that his will is long delayed. The present world chaos may be the prelude to a long period of international confusion in which unscrupulous leaders will continue to ride to power by trampling others in the dust. What then shall be our own policy? Shall the United States say that since it lives in a world dominated by force, it will know no law but force, meet fire with fire, and beat the devil at his own game? Shall we repudiate our long cherished ideas of individual liberty, delete the Bill of Rights from the Constitution, and gradually adopt the ideas as well as the methods of the totalitarian governments? Shall we make military expediency our only guiding principle, blotting out of our heavens all the stars except Mars? God forbid! Whatever our opinion as to the size of the army and navy needed for our national defense, let us remember that force by itself cannot guarantee the preservation of our democracy. If people do not cling to the moral values that have been painfully evolved in the slow process of history, they no longer have any vital contribution to make to Christian civilization and their independence is hardly worth preserving.

The ancient Greeks had a torch race in which the winner who first reached the goal was declared the winner only if he had kept his torch lighted. America may win the armament race and establish herself as the mightiest military nation on the earth but end in darkness because she has failed to guard the flame of righteousness.

Would that we could hear once more the voice of the greatest leader in our early history, a man who was famous in war but who saw with unclouded judgment the issues that confronted the future of his country! The constitutional convention was in session in Philadelphia and the delegates had spent weeks in fruitless discussion. They were discouraged over the possibility of writing a constitution that would be acceptable to the various colonies with their conflicting interests. An influential member of the convention suggested that instead of trying to frame a document which represented their best wisdom, they should follow a policy of expediency and consider what kind of a constitution the colonies would be most apt to ratify. George Washington, the chairman of the convention, arose and reminded his colleagues that if they framed a form of government in which they themselves did not believe, they could not defend it effectively before the country. He closed his speech by saying, "Let us raise a standard to which the wise and just can repair. The event is in the hands of God."

"Righteousness exalteth a nation." But if not! What if nations are exalting themselves by oppression and by ruthless disregard of the common rights of mankind? Do we dare still to raise a standard of righteousness and go forward with God?

IV

Our text has its meaning not only for questions of personal and national duty, but also for the deeper issue of faith in God. "All things work together for good to them that love God," said the apostle Paul. We believe this confidently and with triumphant trust in times of unclouded happiness. We sing joyously with Browning's Pippa, "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world." Too often, however, our religion is unable to stand the test of disappointment and inexplicable sorrow. Almost inevitably a time comes when we are driven from our garden of Eden and an angel with a flaming sword seems to prevent our return. We see through a glass so darkly that all is mystery. The earnest prayer is unanswered and our religion seems only a mockery and a vain delusion. At last we have met the final test and must decide whether we are to fling our faith away like quitters and cowards, or join the ranks of the spiritual heroes who have climbed the steep ascent to heaven through peril, toil and pain.

There is a fine passage from John Bunyan in which he describes his experience in Bedford jail. He was not sure but that his imprisonment would end on the gallows but he did not fear being hanged so much as he did the possibility that in a moment of fear he might deny his Lord. He made up his mind that whatever happened he would still be true to his faith. These are his words: "Wherefore, thought I, I am for going on and venturing my eternal state with Christ whether I have comfort here or no. If God doth not come in, thought I, I will leap off the ladder even blindfolded into eternity—sink or swim, come heaven, come hell. Lord Jesus, if thou wilt catch me, do; if not, I will venture all for thy name." Religion in its highest form always calls for that kind of commitment. Not until we are ready to bet our lives upon God have we shown ourselves worthy of our Christian heritage.

"All things work together for good to them that love God." But if not! Can we take the attitude of Jesus in Gethsemane when in bitter agony he faced what seemed to be final defeat for all his plans and asked that the cup might be taken from him, but concluded his prayer by saying, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done"?

V

"If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." What was the conclusion of the story? Nebuchadnezzar, like a consistent dictator, carried out his threat. His soldiers cast the three men into the fiery furnace. The king peered into the flames to be sure that they had completed their work of destruction, and then turned to his servants in astonishment. "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" he asked. "True, O king," they answered. And the amazed monarch cried out, "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt, and the form of the fourth is like unto the Son of God."

That is the last word in religious faith. Those who have dared to risk their all will become supremely

onscious of spiritual reality. They will find God a ving presence. They will not be left in the fiery urnace alone. We may say with utmost confidence hat God never deserts those who put their trust in im. He does not always prevent them from being corched by the flame, but he himself goes with them nto the pit of their suffering. In the furnace of our ffliction there will be one like unto the Son of God, iving us fellowship in our trial, strengthening us or our ordeal, and enabling us to remain true to the nd. This is the heart of the Christian message and the eternal truth which is symbolized by the cross.

When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace all sufficient shall be thy supply.
The flame shall not hurt thee, I only design
Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine.

The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not, desert to his foes,
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, I'll never forsake.

A Thanksgiving Sermon

By Harold L. Proppe

What shall I render unto the Lord for his benefits oward me? Psalm 116:12.

THE Word of God has a cure for every dark mood. That cure is to thank God at all times and or everything. Thanksgiving is the way out of every ondition and trouble of the soul of man and is the ay into God's fellowship. Thanksgiving and praise re the keys that open the gates. It is through gratitude hat we find the most direct way to the sense of God. When we are utterly thankful, there is an impulse that akes us lift our hearts to God.

Only people who believe in God as a personal being ctively interested in the affairs of man can give praise nd thanksgiving. Of all the holidays we have in our alendar, Thanksgiving is the only one that commemrates, not an event, but an emotion and attitude restng upon the basic idea that God is a partner in human fe. Thanksgiving says: "Know ye not that the Lord e is God? It is he that has made us and not we ourelves. We are his people and the sheep of his pasture." t says also: "In him we live and move and have our eing." It follows of necessity that it would be absurd or an atheist or an infidel to participate in a Thanksiving service, for they deny the very fundamental idea hat makes thanksgiving possible. For them there is o personal God, no loving being, no person in whom ll ultimate reality abides. God to them is not a reality dealized and personified, actively related to the afairs of man. To them God is only a first principle, first cause, and all progress is by resident and inerent forces, by impersonal, blind power.

Atheists and infidels, if they would give thanks, must say something like this: "O mobile and cosmic ether and clay, we thank thee for the blessings of the past year." What nonsense! The very soul in man shrinks back at the awful suggestiveness of the thought. Thanksgiving recognizes the power of a personal God who is interested in human affairs and events.

GIFTS OF THE NATURAL WORLD

In the text the Psalmist recognizes that there is a person, an active God, at the heart of the affairs of this universe and the Psalmist looks about him and counts the blessings of life and then selects some of the things for which he is thankful. He asks, "What

Harold L. Proppe

shall I render unto the Lord for his benefits toward me?"

To begin with, the Psalmist answers his own question by saying, "The benefits of God are seen in the good gifts of the natural world." The Psalmist and the men of his day were outdoor men who tended sheep and whose lives were lived in quiet. They were not always on the "dead jump." They were not always trying to overtake their work; they could take time to notice how the clouds sailed across the sky and how the dawn came up like God's benediction; and how the stars shone. They turned their ear to the wind and heard it whisper, and they heard it in terrifying power and in solacing softness. They said that God made the grass; they looked at the dew and wondered; the mountains reminded them of the righteousness of Jehovah. They said God rode upon a chariot and did fly. They looked abroad and saw the kind of world that was in the broad expanses about them. They knew what it was to meditate and so

they said, "God has been good when he put me in this kind of world."

But what about us? We have all the Psalmist had; we have more. The flowers are blooming for us, but we do not see them—for we are chasing the dollars. The birds are looking for building lots just as they did in the Psalmist's time, but we are less interested in the birds than is the marauding cat. This great round world of God's on which he has written his autograph in constellations that ever burn and on the light of colored flowers around us ever speaks of a personal God. Rebukingly Mrs. Browning writes:

> Earth's crammed with heaven,
> And every common bush aflame with God;
> But only he who sees takes off his shoes;
> The rest sit round it and gather blackberries.

HUMBLE GRATITUDE FOR AMERICA

Then, in the next place, the Psalmist sees the benefits of God in his national life. "Walk about Zion and go round about her, consider her palaces and towers of strength; remember what sort of nation she is; tell how a cloud and fiery pillar led her through the wilderness; tell the nations how Israel continually has the eye of God upon her, and mention the names of her prophets, her poets, her warriors." This is what the Psalmist sees and what he calls upon others to see with him. The Psalmist realizes that one of God's gifts is the gift to which we might apply the word "national." Well might the Psalmist speak to us in America in these critical days. There is need that in the rush of life we should take time out to think of God's benefits to us nationally.

Look at the nations of the earth—Russia, France, Germany, Great Britain, Japan, China—look wherever you will, then let your eye glimpse America and rest upon it with humility and gratitude and let that be expressed in the words of the Psalmist, "God hath not dealt so with any other nation." Let us breathe a prayer that we may always walk before God in humility, for we need to remember that if we, like Israel, have been lifted up and then because of our sin are cast down, we shall go tumbling down to ruin and our damnation shall be deep and dire. We need highly, strongly, firmly to resolve that as far as we are concerned, we will hand down to our children the high and noble traditions that our nation was conceived in the fear of God and in the assured knowledge that "righteousness exalteth a nation and sin is a reproach."

GOD THE NEVER FAILING

Then the Psalmist mentions the benefits of God as centered in the fact of God himself. If we can find nothing else for which to be thankful, with the Psalmist we can thank God for himself; for whatever else be gone, God abides. At all times, he is with us; whatever our trouble, he can help us to meet it; however hard the way, he is on that road alongside of us. The saints of old and our forefathers found great courage and strength, in their hours of distress and poverty, in the consciousness that they still had God and could worship him. He had come into their lives and changed them. He had cast out fear and pride and care; he had given them victory over sin; he had filled their hearts with his love.

The Psalmist dares to talk about God in a way that would interest us marvelously if for the first time we heard about there being no God like Jehovah, the God of Israel. Perhaps we have not thought deeply about this. There are other so-called gods. There is Confucius, Buddha, Mohammed—gods to hundreds of millions of people—and there is Jesus Christ. Now what sort of God did the Psalmist have and what sort of God have we?

Our God incarnated himself in Jesus Christ. Who cried and still cries at the grave? Who sobs over lost men and blesses little children? Who wrote in the sand and lifted his eyes and said to a woman who thought she was in hell, "Go in peace and sin no more"? Who forgave Simon Peter and reached out an arm to save even a Judas? The Jesus Christ of the New Testament was the Jehovah God whom the Psalmist knew in the Old Testament and to him we can go, even as the Psalmist did, with all our cares, problems and sins. We can bring them all to him and know that his tenderness will exceed the tenderness of an own mother and his love will eclipse the love of a brother. The answer to the Psalmist's question each one of us must give for ourselves, "What shall I render unto the Lord?" In the words of the Psalmist may we say, "I will take of the cup of salvation and pay my vows in the presence of his people."

THE DUTY OF THANKSLIVING

The greatest gift we can make to God is not so much thanksgiving, but thanksliving. It is to commit ourselves to his strong, wise hands. When we are there, in that place of entire commitment, all that meets us can work nothing but good. That is the Christian victory. It is the way of utter peace, of freedom from fear and care. Some of us have other ways of living. Like one who came on disaster, we try to walk always on the sunny side of the street. We avoid the shadows. But on that principle we cannot walk straight. We will shirk the way of duty or right or service. And that is fatal. Our souls need the shadow as well as the sun to ripen them.

It is not easy to commit life utterly to God's guiding. It means being willing to become only what God can make us. It means being ready to be used only as God can use us. It means caring for the life of our souls more than for that of our bodies. That is not an easy thing to learn. There are sharp struggles to be passed through before we come to this point of freedom. There is a vision of life in Christ to be seen in all its beauty before the spell of the world can be broken. But in this place of commitment there is peace. We can meet life in the spirit of gay adventure. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain, whatever may come. We cease to be timid sailors, afraid of every wind, and filled with panic by every cloud. There is One at the helm who can use every wind and every current. The world becomes full of the

goodness of God. For us there is nothing else in it but his mercy.

"All things are yours, for ye are Christ's." With this secret in our hearts we can thank God at all times, and for everything.

Christianity Confronts Communism

By Vere V. Loper

THE struggle in Europe has brought to the forefront of our attention the relation between communism and Christianity. The exigencies of war have made strange bedfellows these days. Many Americans who have been most violent in their opposition to communism now turn out to be precisely those who are most eager that we shall lend every aid to Russia in the present situation. We are therefore involved in the strange contradiction of attempting to deny communists the right to speak, to have a place on the ballot, to belong to labor unions, and yet we are paying ever mounting taxes in part to aid Russia.

I cannot resolve these conflicts. I do confess to unholy amusement at the alacrity with which both our American communists and our "red baiters" change policies and attitudes with the shifting status of Russia and our relationship to the international scene. I shall not attempt to suggest the course which I think the United States should follow in the present emergency. I am content to leave such matters to the proper authorities of our government. I do not propose to talk of Russia here, except as the discussion of communism demands it. How communistic Russia is would be about as difficult a question as how Christian the United States is. But communism as a social and economic theory is well defined, and to this subject in its relationship to Christianity I limit myself.

A FORMIDABLE FOE

My basic conviction is that we need to keep clearly in mind at this period that communism is one of the most formidable foes of Christianity in our world. This is in danger of being obscured by the current situation. It needs to be kept in sharp relief. The reasons are definite. I mention only a few of them.

Communism is a menace to Christianity because of its animus against the church. It is easy to understand the reasons for the growth of hatred of the church by the older Russian communists. The Orthodox Church of Russia, which was the state church, was an ally of the czar in the oppression of the people. Orthodox priests lulled the people into spiritual mysticism while they shared the spoils derived by exploiting the masses. Frequently the priest was an informer, using even the confessional to secure information which sent many critics of the government across the weary stretches to exile in Siberia. The church furthered its ends by foolish superstitions, as the anti-religious museums of Russia amply testify.

But however logical may be the basis of the hatred of the old communist in Russia for the church, the churches in our country have hardly justified the transplanting of that hatred. However inadequate the social ministry of the American church may have been, the Christian leaders of this country include many men who have worked and suffered for such objectives as social justice, in which the communist professes to believe. Yet here as elsewhere the church feels the sting of communist opposition. In twenty years I have known personally only two communists who were trying to be loyal both to the church and to the communist cause. Hatred of the church is one of several identifying marks of a communist.

We can get some idea as to what would happen to the churches here, if the United States were to go communist, by a study of events within the Baltic countries after they were taken over by Russia recently. The Swedish paper, *The Church Under the Cross,* gives a brief picture: "The ministers of religion in Esthonia, Latvia and Lithuania were allowed to become Soviet citizens, but not to have the right to vote. A number of clergymen, including Metropolitan Alexander of the Esthonian Orthodox Church, were persecuted. Pastors and priests were banished, and special concentration camps are said to have been established for them, because they were not allowed to come in contact with their fellow prisoners, who might be influenced by them."

Writing to the *Christian Century* from excellent sources of information in Geneva, Denzil Patrick continues the story: "One of the first things to be transformed was the school system. . . . There was no longer any such thing as a Christian school. Hundreds of schoolteachers were dismissed. At the University of Riga communism was introduced as a special subject with a staff of seven teachers. A Protestant and a Catholic professor were each given the choice between deportation to Siberia or undertaking the scientific development of godless propaganda. They chose martyrdom. Churches were closed, monasteries in Lithuania were dissolved, and the liquidation of the ministry was proceeding quickly. An anti-religious reign of terror had begun in the Baltic area."

COMMUNISM AS A RELIGION

Reinhold Niebuhr states in clear words the second source of conflict between Christianity and communism: "The reason communism has unfolded such a consistent animus against historic religion, particularly Christianity, is because it combines the hatred of one religion for another with the repulsion of irreligion for religion."

Communism does not fulfill our definition of what a vital religion should be, but this does not prevent it from having many of the characteristics of religion. It has a philosophy of life, clearly worked out from a few primary principles. It has a social objective, its kingdom of God being a classless society. It has faith in mankind which is impractical even to a Christian. It has a doctrine to proclaim, to which it adheres so rigidly that we usually speak of the communist as "doc-

trinaire." It secures more rigid adherence to that doctrine than does any church to its creed. It has all of the authoritarian control which characterizes the Catholic churches. It has a sacred book, Karl Marx, and the orthodox communist clings to it as the fundamentalist clings to his literal interpretation of the Bible. It has a sacred shrine, the tomb of Lenin. It has its images—the pictures of Lenin hang in millions of homes where in former days the sacred ikon was placed. It has a prophet: Stalin.

When we see in communism these striking characteristics of religion, it seems hardly accurate to say that Russia has killed the church. The Soviet, rather, has substituted a new church and a new religion for an old faith. The Russian people are fundamentally most religious, and communism would never have succeeded in reducing the church to a fragment if it had not offered substitute satisfactions to religious impulses. The new religion is narrow and limited as compared with Christianity, for it deals with only a fragment of life in a most dogmatic manner. Consequently it is impelled by the animus of a very narrow religion for its rival; it hates Christianity with the intolerance of bigotry.

CHRISTIANITY VERSUS COMMUNISM

The third source of irreconcilable conflict between Christianity and communism is their great disparity at fundamental points of thought. I mention them with full awareness that the communist frequently has been better in conduct than in theory, whereas the Christian, never better than his theory, is frequently worse. Thought has its fundamental importance apart from conduct.

The Christian believes that the ultimate reality in this world is God, who represents the highest intelligence, power and love. The communist does not believe that there is a God, and he is busily engaged in the effort to stamp out that belief through government in Russia.

The Christian believes that Jesus Christ gives us the supreme revelation of the nature of God. The communist accepts many of the social teachings of Jesus but denies absolutely the most important element in Jesus—his revelation of the nature of deity.

The Christian believes that the soul is immortal, continuing in a future life whose finest elements have been described by the word "heaven." Yaroslavsky, president of the Godless League, has pressed into the schools of the Baltic his own book in which he says: "The only kingdom of heaven that exists is the one which we are making for ourselves today under the leadership of Comrade Stalin; and the only real hell is to be found in the capitalistic countries, where workers are being sucked dry and plagued to death."

The Christian believes that the most important factors in determining the course of human history are moral and spiritual in nature. He grants the importance of the social and economic factors, but follows him who said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God." The communist believes that economic factors are primary and will ultimately determine the course of history. Friedrich Engels, collaborator with Marx on the Communist Manifesto, frankly stated that "the ultimate cause and the great moving power of all important historic events is the economic development of society, changes in the modes of production and exchange."

The Christian believes that the church is one of the basic human institutions. The communist deplores its strength and uses former church buildings in the endeavor to stamp out the church.

The Christian believes that religion represents one of the highest faculties of man, ramifying into many departments of his life. The communist advertises in

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great letters: "Religion is the opiate of the people." To the communist religion is for the frustrated person; to the Christian it is for any person in any department of his life which he would lift to a higher level.

The Christian believes that the highest goals will be achieved only as we become creative individuals who think and live in the spirit of Jesus Christ. The communist places his reliance primarily on the reorganization of the social order—the economic system.

A vital distinction exists in methods of social struggle. No communist at this stage of history can be a pacifist. He deplores most international war, but believes that class struggle and world revolution are necessary preludes to the classless society. The Christian believes that war is the fruit of social sin which should be eliminated. The Christian must either be a pacifist or the type of non-pacifist who does his duty as he sees it but at the same time never forgets that war in the eyes of God is a sin. The communist is a

stranger to such language and concepts. He is more inclined than the Christian to claim that the ends justify the means. He defends his purges, his starving of millions in the Crimea, as the necessary means toward achieving his social goals. The Christian is humble in his failure to use Christian instrumentalities in every situation, and continues to believe that we should find means consonant with the goals toward which we strive.

I can draw only one conclusion, that the gulf is fixed for all time between these two great movements, and that an alert church will keep itself in strong and vigorous opposition to communism. How shall it do the job?

STRENGTHS OF COMMUNISM

My first conviction is that we must build our program on a full and fair knowledge of the elements of strength in communism. Jesus said in one of his parables that a wise general does not go out against an army until he has accurately judged the strength of his enemy. I am convinced that there are elements of great strength in communism and that we can never effectively fight it until we understand them. I list some of them briefly:

An important strength of communism is its world vision. Thousands of communist youth were gathered a few years ago in the Park of Culture and Rest in Moscow, where the great assembly heard addresses by Chinese, Japanese, Americans, and other communists from all over the world. At the sound of a bugle they united in the chant: "We are changing the world!" The thrill and challenge of far horizons is an element of strength in communism.

Combined with world vision, the communist has what a Christian would call missionary zeal. He is out to convert the world to his doctrine. Picked leaders are sent to Russia for careful training before they launch out, missionaries for the Red cause, ready for sacrificial service.

The communist puts great stress on the power of education. The Soviet has given educational advantages to millions of Russians who had not been touched by the feeble educational system of old Russia. Communists, judged by those in our country, are eager to print and distribute literature. Their centers are apt to be bookstores; one of them, as you know, is within a few blocks of our church. They expect their followers to submit themselves to an intellectual process.

A CALL TO DEVOTION

Another power of communism is that it dares to put staggering tasks before men and require of them heroic devotion. It has given young men dreams for which they are willing to withstand torture, to be persecuted, to die. Communism is not content merely to amuse its young people—as the church sometimes is, it seems to me. Communism appeals to the stern stuff in the heart of youth as did the Master, who said, "Take up your cross."

Another strength of communism is in its remarkable economic achievements. Have you read *Russia's Iron Age* by William H. Chamberlin? The communists look upon him as a foe, but his book gives an amazing picture of a primitive people turned almost overnight into a great industrial nation.

The social achievements of communism are equally impressive. The problem of unemployment was solved in Russia without a war. The communist puts the Christian to shame in his elimination of race prejudice. We have much to learn from Russia in the matter of reformation of criminals, of treatment of the old, of recreational facilities for the masses. Social justice is the theme song of the communist, and you may wish he could play another tune once in a while, but you cannot belittle the genuine social advance he has made at many points.

I know the horrible cost at which some of this advance has been won. I am aware of the black side of the picture. But I have learned to my sorrow that some people simply will not face the genuine strength in communism. I shall be very much surprised if someone does not call me a communist for admitting that there can be any good in communism. Such people fight it blindly and ineffectively, striking down friend and foe alike. The struggle going on now in Europe ought to make the strength of communism clear. And so I say again that the first step for the effective fighter against communism is to understand its strength and to build a program based firmly on that understanding.

CHURCH ATTITUDE TOWARD COMMUNISM

The second step in opposing communism is for the church and its leaders to refuse to enter into any alliance by which we give our strength or our sanction to any communist-dominated group. We cannot permit communists to be in key positions in Christian work. I realize here that I am on dangerous ground. I would not be clasisfied with "red-baiters" whose favorite method of disposing of people with whom they do not agree is to cry "Communist!" I would not give comfort to those who think that every religious peace group is dominated by communists. Some are and others are not, and the information of blacklists at this point is not reliable. But there are communists, and they have penetrated to dominating positions in some situations. And through bitter experience some of us have come to the conclusion that we cannot cooperate with them.

The reasons are clear. The gap between Christianity and communism, as I have previously stated, is too great. Their interest in Christian objectives is frequently not sincere, and often takes the form of using the church for their own ends. They must be watchers. An effort has been made to use me for communist objectives many times in Berkeley by people who characteristically concealed their identity as communists. If I had not been alert I might have played into their hands. I was asked on one occasion if a certain paper could not be distributed after our services; upon examination I discovered it was a communist publication. (Communist tactics were strikingly illustrated by the presence of two people, at the close of the service at which this sermon was preached, who stood near the

entrance to the church distributing, without permission, copies of *The Soviet Power* by the Dean of Canterbury.)

There are widespread communist efforts to penetrate into our churches through such devices as "Russian Relief." When communists are in the ascendancy they dominate any group. The American Peace Mobilization made a strong bid for church support, but their peace pickets in front of the White House disappeared the day after Russia was invaded.

HOW DEAL WITH COMMUNISTS?

Third,we need a community strategy to deal with communists in our city. They have demanded freedom of speech. Since this is the United States—not Russia or Germany—they are entitled to it. They have been aware that most groups in the city would like to refuse them this liberty, and in this knowledge they have made trouble for the city government, the schools, the university, the community chest, the Christian Associations, and have tried to make it for the churches. We kick them from one place to another and they thrive on it. I wish that the city government, the university, the community chest and the churches could all combine to see that they do have a place to meet, that the organization which allows them to meet is protected rather than attacked, and that nothing further is publicly said about their meetings. They asked if they could not use the churches, when we knew they already had a place to meet. Their obvious purpose was to make trouble for the church if accepted, or throw scorn at the church if refused. They were told that the matter would be discussed when they no longer had a place to meet. Must we continue to go on permitting them to pick us off one at a time?

Let community groups stand together and go the second mile in giving them their American rights, and thus silence the flood of trouble and publicity which is the sure sign that they are getting that which they desire far more than they desire freedom of speech.

A NEW VISION OF THE CHURCH

A fourth element in combating communism is found in a vitalization of the world-wide message and work of the Christian church. The thought that we can deal with a world-envisioning program such as communism by mere negative restraint in our own community would be humorous if it were not tragic. We might well leave the policy of dealing with movements by silencing their advocates to Hitler, who handles that better than we do. A positive program which envisages the world and is at work in it is the only force which can hold the trenches opposite a foe whose strategy calls for world revolution. The Christian church is at work in every country, and with all races, of the world.

Until we take our missionary task seriously, we will never effectively face communism in our world. Until we catch a new vision of the ecumenical church—the Church of Christ in all the world—we will never stand up to our foremost rival for mastery of the world. The missionary who goes into all the world preaching the gospel through Christian schools, hospitals, social centers and churches, is building a strong bulwark against communism.

A further element in a strategy against communism is that we shall take more seriously the social implications of the gospel of Christ. Communism thrives on injustice, race hatred, unemployment and other social maladies. We must build a more Christian world or get ready for world revolution. The alternative is clear-cut and inescapable. As long as injustice claims any substantial section of our life we have no right to silence those who protest it. Communism will have no chance if we will—in the name of Jesus—rectify the social wrongs which bring suffering to his people. We cannot win over communism by talking or keeping them from talking. We can win by making Christianity a force and a power in solving the race problem, poverty, unemployment, labor difficulties, war and other maladjustments of our world.

We believe that the Christian personality is the final answer to the world's need. Let that personality prove its authenticity by building a more Christian world!

The Answers Must Come Out of Life

You cannot tell where Jesus' words ended and his deeds began. Deeds and words together become word made flesh—a fact. Jesus did not argue the power of prayer, but went out and prayed, all night sometimes, and in the morning the presence of God was revealed—a fact. He did not say the path of sacrifice was right, but he went to the cross. That was a fact. There he hangs upon the cross, a vast question mark, "My God, why?" All our questions gathered up into that question.

How far can force go in the world? It can go a long way; it put that Man on the cross.

How far can injustice go? He can be taken from court to court and be denied justice, and at the end tortured as a malefactor.

How long can misquotation go? He was crucified on misquotation.

How far can a man see his life's work go crash? He saw his.

How far can men seem to disregard God and man? A long way, until the cry is forced out, "My God, why?"

How far can force go? A long way today; tomorrow it can be triumphant; but the third day it breaks itself on the fact of God.

How far can injustice go? Today a long way, and tomorrow; but the third day God's justice speaks, and his is the last word.

How far can misquotation go? A long way today and tomorrow; but the third day the eternal truth of God speaks.

How far can we be deserted of God and man? Today and tomorrow the clouds; and the third day an Easter morning and the touch of his presence. The answers had to come out of life.

E. Stanley Jones.

After Giving Thanks'

By David K. Barnwell

And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave to them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Luke 22:19.

TO choose a text from the Communion service for a Thanksgiving sermon may seem strange. Yet it not, for the central element in the Communion is surely Thanksgiving. In the accounts of the last supper, both in the Gospels and in Paul's letters, the distribution of the bread and the wine is, in each instance, preceded by the giving of thanks. "And after he had given thanks, he broke the bread." Again—when he had taken the cup and given thanks, he gave to his disciples."

It is interesting to observe that in the Eastern Church—by which I mean the Eastern Orthodox group, that great wing of Christendom that broke with Western, Roman, Christianity in the early centuries—in the Eastern church the note of thanksgiving was retained in the rituals and liturgies as it was not in Western Christianity, either Roman Catholic or the later Protestant groups which came from the Roman.

It is further of interest to note that in the writings of the early church, for example the letters of St. Ignatius, 112 A.D., the Communion is spoken of as the Eucharist—the Greek word for "Thanksgiving." Had we kept that early, first-century church custom we should announce in our calendars from time to time, not that the Communion or the Lord's Supper would be held, but that the Eucharist—the Thanksgiving service—would be observed.

In many ways it is a pity that we lost the word, for one consequence surely has been that our Communion services have been more somber, cheerless, even unereal than should be the case. The characteristic Western church note has been mournful memory rather than thankful rejoicing.

THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

Solemn and full of the dignity of the Lord's approaching sacrifice the service should doubtless be, but not lugubrious or clouded with misgiving and loss. In John's record of the closing supper, and in the long address he puts on the lips of Jesus, there are repeatedly such phrases as "my joy I give you," "that your joy might be full," "be courageous, I have overcome the world," "let not your heart be troubled," "your grief shall be turned to gladness."

In his closing prayer he asks that these disciples may have his "joy in all its fullness, in themselves."

Eastern Christianity has been right to keep, as the central note of Communion, "thanksgiving." One further historical note is most interesting: the Scottish church, of all Protestantism, retained this same eucharistic flavor. Scotland came to revise the English Prayer Book, and finding the Church of England service too meager in "thanks," added greatly to the thanksgiving portions, so that the Scottish liturgy today differs from the English chiefly in this respect: its emphasis on the note of thanksgiving. One of the teachers of the Scottish church from whom I learned the most, writes urgently: "The service (that is, the Communion) should be encompassed with dignity and with solemnity—but we must learn to rejoice. We believe the gospel is the gladdest of revelations."

I wish that we might recover a far more exultant, rejoicing, triumphant worship—in the Lord's Supper, and, for that matter, in all our other services. We ought never to go out from our service hours depressed, despairing or in anywise cast down, but with lighter hearts, with renewed hopes and a radiant thankfulness, the closing moments a hymn of joy in our spirits.

GLADNESS OUT OF TRAGEDY!

Do not mistake me—there is and must be a place in the church's worship for penitence, and a realization of the cost of great living, and the responsibilities of our Christian tasks, and an awareness of the sorrow of the world and the deep tragedies in life itself. To be sure! Here we have a place where we may bring our cares, and the hurts and aches and the loneliness of the human spirit; we bring them, and we bring our failures and follies, and in the quiet times, the meditative moods, the prayers, we open these dark areas of the mind and heart to the influences of the Divine Spirit, and to the unspoken comradeship of our fellow worshipers; and the tides of the life and love of God lift us up, and send us out mended of soul and eased of tension, and deeply heartened for our tasks. A church service ought to be a time and place where mourning is turned into joy—where depression, discouragement, despair give way to determination, courage, hope. Some people always leave church as though they had just been identifying someone in the morgue. Or, as Dr. Maltbie once put it, "Some people in church look like guests at a royal banquet, who couldn't afford to be left out, but have been forbidden by their doctor to eat anything."

You will not suspect me of urging any artificial gladness, the sort of chirpy, superficial optimism put on like a mask, for effect. Or, as Luccock calls it, "pumped-up" gladness, suggesting that the real thing wells up like a mountain spring from the deep. To put on a fixed smile and affect a hearty tone isn't enough—there must be a genuine, interior bubbling of enthusiasm and vitality. Then gratitude is not mere politeness—but an authentic expression of something genuinely felt and enjoyed.

'HE BROKE THE BREAD—AND GAVE IT'

It is, however, of the consequence of giving thanks that we are thinking this morning. In the words of Paul: "And after he had given thanks—he broke the bread, and gave it—to his disciples." Jesus offered thanks for something that forthwith, after the thanksgiving, he distributed to others.

During the coming Thanksgiving season the American people will offer thanks. And then? After the

giving of thanks—what follows? Our text suggests the consequence: That for which we have given thanks is then put out to use. Gratitude passes over into service. Appreciation is put into living practice. The word of thanks on the lips becomes the gift of the hands. Praise becomes a deed. Emotion becomes purposeful activity. How profoundly the world needs such consequences! This is the old, old theme, but urgent still—lip service becoming life service.

Well, obviously we all know from personal experience that a genuine feeling of gratitude simply has to express itself in action. So much of our gratitude is mere politeness. When, on the other hand, something done for us by a friend is truly felt, everything in us tends to respond by doing something in return. Let the instinct be suppressed, or denied, or neglected—and something fine in us seems smothered. You often find people in whom that has happened. They have accepted, and accepted, and accepted—and have not given. They take your gifts or services as a matter of course. Even their murmured thanks loses its note of sincerity.

THE BLESSINGS OF FREEDOM AND PEACE

So it is that the offering of thanks to God, the praise of God, and the service of our fellow men are inextricably bound together. "And when he had given thanks [to God], he broke the bread, and gave it [to men].

If the newspaper accounts are accurate in reporting Thanksgiving sermons, two or three of the most frequently mentioned blessings are freedom, peace, democracy. For these great boons, even more than any material prosperity, America returns thanks. And now, after we have given thanks—what next?

You see, of course, the issue: Having given thanks for freedom, shall we not need to distribute this tremendous blessing? And peace, and democracy? Nothing that we cherish for ourselves alone has any longer any security. The world is a long time learning that realistic lesson.

Freedom, peace, democracy are ideals, someone tells us. Yes, but it depends on what is meant by ideals. Many a man thinks of an ideal as something like a memento, to be cherished, admired, occasionally dusted off and gazed at with misty eyes, and then put away again in a drawer. But I will tell you what happens to ideals when they are treated like that. One day you go to the drawer, on some fine anniversary, to enjoy the ritual once more—and behold, the drawer is empty. The lovely ideal has evaporated.

Ideals must not be treated as mementos. They are rather like talents, capacities, abilities—they must be constantly exercised, practiced, used, or they go. An unused talent will soon diminish with disuse. So ideals must be regularly practiced.

AMERICA'S MISSED OPPORTUNITY

America will not retain the ideals of freedom and democracy unless she constantly, and with exertion and discipline, practices them. Peace was a lovely ideal about which statesmen orated, and Kellogg pacts were drawn, and all the people cherished it. But peace was not sufficiently practiced in its details—struggled for, paid for—so the ideal retired to some dim future. In this country alone, we are spending several billion dollars on the best brains obtainable for defense boards and war commissions. What might have been possible if, ten years ago, Congress had appropriated the sum of one lonely billion, and commandeered the best brains to prepare the world for peace? Even in Europe, ten years ago, an intent so serious as to have a billion dollar backing would have been seriously listened to. So now we spend several billions otherwise. We have never taken the peace ideal seriously—just wishfully. And now one cannot help wondering if we will take democracy, or freedom, or citizenship responsibilities, or justice within our own borders, or honest good-neighborliness beyond our own boundaries—whether we will commit ourselves to these things, costingly, or merely wishfully—and simply enjoy, graspingly, the semblance of prosperity that attends the vast expenditures of the defense program? After which will come the payoff! Oh, my country, after you have given thanks—for what our fathers won—what then? After we have lifted up our gratitude for freedom, and representative government, and democratic principles—what then?

"And the Lord took bread, and after he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it."

NO DEFEATISM FOR THE CHRISTIAN!

We find ourselves in a time of profound change that is not to be compared readily with any other age; and yet it is akin to the period when Greek civilization broke up after the death of Alexander. New empires rose and fell swiftly, and the face of civilization changed. Men of reason, believing all was lost in the cataract, gave up in despair, and barbarians took over the destinies of man. There are not lacking today, in the hysterias of fear and desperation, signs that many men of reason will follow the same course. "All is lost," they cry, "save himself who can." The prospects of world federation, the ways of democratic government, the hope of freedom, the ideals of Christianity—they are going, they tell us; we must resort to the defenses of the barbarians, and bid farewell to our ideals—in order to save our flesh alone.

The Christian will not yield to that cry. He will choose the other alternative that is surely offered. He will face the upheavals that seem to overwhelm, and will breast "the wave of the future" with a shout of faith, and the courage of undefeated convictions, and will be swift in the strategy of adjustment.

Is democracy to be saved? Then it must not be defended only by the huge preparation of armament. Arms will save democracy only from external foes; the greater foe will work within these borders. Democracy will be impregnable only if it be extended, distributed, strengthened here. Democracy is not just a freedom to cast a ballot, the right to vote. Democracy is the right to health, and home, and work. If by our slum areas, or our undernourished subprivileged populations we are denying the opportunities of health

to multitudes, then they are not truly free. If there are men who honestly want to work and who cannot secure work, they are not truly free.

DEMOCRACY MUST BE PUT TO WORK

We have rested in the assured contentment that nowhere else in the world has there been such widespread opportunity—and it is true—but events move swiftly now, and our contentment with the slow processes of change and improvement will not suffice. There must develop intense desire, and accelerated action, to translate the ideals of democracy and freedom into economic and social realities. A democracy that is not working

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will be susceptible to the poisons that dictators brew. Only a democracy that gives freedom to a vast multitude of its people will be secure. The great experiment of democracy has been largely political, and it has worked. It must become economic and social, if it is to be sustained. Let this country be truly free—freedom of opportunity for all its people to work, to be healthful, to have adequate homes—and no poison of totalitarianism will affect us from within. No orations in Washington, Wall Street, or Union Square will save democracy—but the power of the democratic ideal actually to transform life into ever richer opportunities and securities—that would save it.

To match the promises of the dictators, democracy must have a program that works in time. Ideals fail when there is lacking a growing body of facts behind them. Support them with facts and then ideals become realities.

Consider the basic ideal of the Christian program: that is, the ethic of love. The ultimate principle upon which the Christian gospel rests is the ethic of love. It is an ideal. It has been widely accepted as the basis for genuine and successful home life. The process of sharing, of mutual concern, of sacrifice on the part of individuals on behalf of the family—of a cooperative good will for the sake of all, the willingness of all to suffer with one who is required to suffer—these qualities of love make home life beautiful, desirable, workable. It is an ideal; we don't fully live it, but we constantly strive toward it, are ashamed when we fail, and resolve to do better. In short, we keep the ideal at work, and uncounted lovely homes and happy families testify to the reality of the love ethic. Churches try, and partially succeed, to use the love ethic as the basis of organization. At least churches accept the principle as the real dynamic of life, and where it is sincerely done there are fine and enduring fellowships to be found.

THE CHRISTIAN LOVE ETHIC

But society has not at all accepted the Christian love ethic as applicable to economic and industrial life. Upon the contrary it is almost universally denied, not regarded as suitable to the hard workaday, competitive order of business. Our young people hear much in church school and church about the principles of Jesus, and then are thrust into a society, a life, where such principles are not regarded—and utter confusion is the result. Our young people pass from homes where shared, cooperative enterprise is the basis for work, from playing fields where teamwork is emphasized even in the midst of friendly competition, then they go out into a structure of society where such principles are doubted and more often openly flouted; the consequence being disillusionment for which we have not prepared them. They become, as we have all too much become, skeptical middle-age.

It is going to be a tremendous task to effect the reality of the ideal in the realm of the economic and the political. It is, however, an effort that simply cannot be dodged. If the Christian church has a supreme job in this and the next generation, that job is to mold the raw stuff of life in the economic and social order to meet the demands of the love ethic. There's a job for the Christian laymen of these years. That task will make the work of empire builders look like tiddle-dewinks. Tremendous, overwhelming task—it is nevertheless our hope of salvation.

WE CAN STILL GIVE THANKS

The protagonists of evil have the world in their grip, and there is tragedy enough in store until their grip be loosened. But evil has in it the seeds of its own destruction, for it preys upon itself as well as upon the good. They rend the world, it is true, but in the end they rend themselves, and are devoured by each other. For the principle upon which they work is one of ruthless, destructive competition and ill will. They corrupt and are in turn corrupted and decay. Only the principle of good will, of cooperation, can win at last; for it alone has survival value. It is the one assured lesson of history.

Our trouble is that we, and most of our kind, have only half-believed. We have had a divided allegiance —the love of God, and the service of Mammon. One principle in the home, and the other principle in the market; an ethic for Sunday and a different ethic for Monday—and a shrug of the shoulders at the difference.

But I have great hope. We are the beholders of a world revolution. Paul has a word for it: "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together," he wrote. He might have been describing this hour in history. Out of the travail, new birth; beyond the revolution, reconstruction—the Spirit of God brooded upon the chaos of primeval waters, and there was the dawn of life. That which is good and true will endure, stripped of accumulated evil and wrong. It is ours to share in the creative processes. Therefore we give thanks and take heart. Even on the night in which he was betrayed, he took bread—and gave thanks—and gave it to them. Then, satisfied in his soul, he went to the Cross—the Christian world fellowship had been born.

Christian Approach to This Tragedy of Suffering

By Harold A. Bosley

Then said I, Ah, Lord God! surely Thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul. Jeremiah 4:10.

THE tragedy of the modern world is too confused, too vast and too terrible to be compressed into any concise definition. But that fact does not relieve us of the obligation to seek a cleaner understanding of it. Much less does it bring to naught our Christian conviction that this and every other age must be confronted with the redeeming will of God as we see it, both in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and in the Christian tradition. Therefore, both because we cannot escape coming to some kind of terms with the tragedy of the modern world and because we must grapple with it "in His name and for His sake," it is the part of wisdom to seek a cleaner understanding, first, of its general nature, then, of certain concrete forms in which we encounter it from day to day, and, finally, of our Christian task in the face of it all.

TRAGIC DRAMAS—YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Two men, far removed from each other in time and space, but not in spirit, Aristotle and Maxwell Anderson, can help us understand the general nature of the tragedy which has overtaken us. Aristotle made a careful study of the great tragic dramas that are one of the glories of ancient Greece. He concluded that, from the point of view of how they affect their audiences, there are four kinds of tragedies: tragedy of plot, of suffering, of character, of spectacle. The differences between these audience-reactions are real because they reflect differences in the tragic events in the dramas themselves. In some dramas plot does stand out as the dominant fact; in others, suffering; in others, character; and in others, the spectacular flourish and manner of presentation.

I do not see how we can survey the drama of modern life and escape the conclusion that it is one terrible and long drawn out tragedy of sheer suffering. But tragic suffering is much more than simple pain, as Maxwell Anderson points out. A tragic hero "must pass through an experience that opens his eyes to an error of his own. He must learn through suffering. In a tragedy he suffers death itself as a consequence of his fault and the recognition of his fault and the consequent alteration of his course of action."

This is more than an apt characterization of a tragic hero like Hamlet, though it is that; it is as trenchant a description of a tragic age as we shall ever find. Was it not Livy, the Roman historian, who set his pen to the grim task of tracing the development of Roman character from its earliest period—"until these last days when we can endure neither our vices nor their remedies"? Did not Jesus weep over Jerusalem, the city that he sought to save, only to be balked by that stormy self-righteousness which finally proved to be its undoing? Was not Jeremiah contemplating a tragic age when he felt that the confusion around him was so great it could come from nothing less than inconsistency in God himself: "Ah, Lord God, surely Thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem saying, Ye shall have peace, whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul"?

THE TRAGEDY OF DESTRUCTION

Not many, I think, will dissent from the conclusion that we are living in an age akin to these earlier ones; that ours, as theirs, is an age of tragic suffering; that it is an age in which "the sword" of events "reacheth unto the soul"—that basic pattern of personal and social life as envisioned by the Christian faith and implanted as ideals in Christian institutions.

And today we encounter this tragedy of which the sword is an all too fit symbol in terribly concrete ways. Destruction, artificial idealism, despair, degeneracy, new disintegrations suggest some of the kinds of suffering preying upon our world today.

The simple fact of *destruction* is one of the most obvious characteristics of our day. Destruction of life, ideals, homes, cities, cathedrals, ships, canals, museums and industries. The cost of this leveling of life in a spasm of animal fury cannot be computed. We do not even attempt it. We simply behold it in the silent agony of despair. So much might have been done for the enrichment and ennoblement of human life had we only been wise enough to harness to creative efforts all the energy that is now going into these acts of destruction.

Men are nerved to face and endure the wholesale destruction of the day by means of a great amount of *artificial idealism*. The changes are rung on freedom,

emocracy, security, manifest destiny, the will of God, : cetera.

Consider a few of the monstrous perversions of plain istorical fact which seek to make the curse of total ar endurable. Some are found in *Mein Kampf;* ome in the speeches of Mussolini; some in the journals f Christian theology. The men who are about to die re variously told that "war is a sacrament—the di- inely ordained moment when life achieves true glory;" nat "war ennobles character;" that "this is a just ar;" that "the Christian can only say 'Yes' to this ar." There is a dread day of judgment awaiting all uch counsels. The outraged conscience of ethical reli- ion will get a hearing soon or late, and it will make nort shrift of such idealistic dodges and maneuvers as nese. And when that day comes, if we may believe ecent history, cynicism will take possession of many a fe that has been buoyed up by these artificial ideals.

WASTE LANDS OF WAR

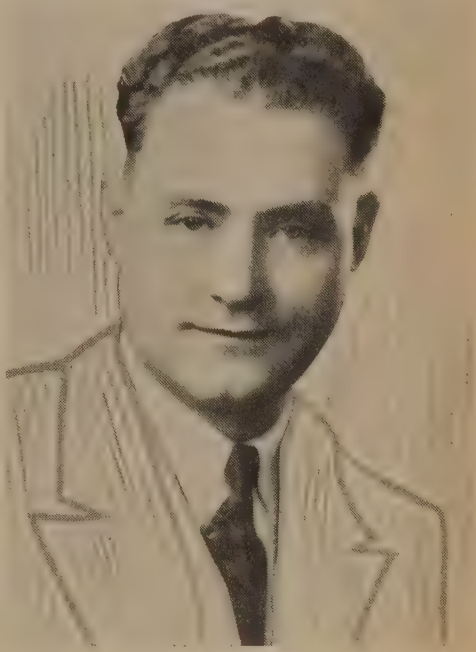
Out of destruction and artificial idealism grows *espair.* The kind of despair that shatters the integrity f persons and peoples. The kind you see in the open- ng chapter of *Out of the Night.* The kind you will nd a vivid chronicle of in a book which we ought to e reading these days, *All Quiet on the Western Front.* n one poignant section the young German soldier tries o figure out what the war has done to him and his omrades. This is his conclusion: "We have become waste land. . . . Today we would pass through the cenes of our youth like travelers. We are burnt up by ard facts. . . . We are forlorn like children, and xperienced like old men, we are crude and sorrowful nd superficial—I believe we are lost. . . . Our knowl- dge of life is limited to death." And he concludes by kening his life to No-Man's Land: "field of craters within and without."

Vera Brittain in her *Testament of Youth* says that he last war condemned her and her generation to live o the end of their days "in a world without confidence, without security, a world in which every dear personal elationship would be fearfully cherished under the hadow of apprehension."

We are being told—and truly, I think—that "one f the biggest problems of our times is that of *degen- racy* stemming from despair." We cannot set a whole eneration of men to thinking war, talking war, plan- ing war and waging war without staggering moral nd social reverberations. The worth of moral codes, long with the worth of human life, is challenged by he fact of war. Immorality of every kind will in- rease. Laws will be broken. Conventions will be flouted. Another gin and jazz era will come. Another "lost generation" will hunt through bizarre forms of literature and art in frantic search for its soul. An- other generation of children born during these calamit- ous days will grow up in homes haunted by hunger, depression, despair and fear for the future. The aver- age age of the first offender in crime will continue its drop to a new low. Only a few years ago it was twenty years and over; now it is eighteen, and it is still drop- ping. Demagogues will arise in every area of life telling us of new "promised lands" to which they alone can lead us. And, because of our desire to escape the almost unendurable agony of apprehension and indeci- sion, they will find many followers among us.

WHAT OF TOMORROW?

It is true, of course, that the widespread breakup of social and political patterns of life offers an unparal- leled opportunity for rebuilding on new and stabler foundations. Mr. John Foster Dulles calls our atten- tion to this in his assertion: "It has been demonstrated, beyond doubt, that the old system of many disconnected sovereignties, each a law unto itself, inevitably breeds



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war. We must not keep humanity chained to such a wheel. Laying aside timidity, adding practicality to sentimentality, we must fearlessly plan a new world order." Of course, we should try to do just that. Courageous leaders like Mr. Dulles are now, and will become even greater, towers of strength in the darken- ing days that lies ahead. But an especial kind of suf- fering lies in store for us at precisely this point of need.

The spiritual energies of most of us will be so com- pletely depleted by the forces of cynicism, despair and degeneracy that we simply will not answer the roll call for the new and greater Cause. We'll give it up as hopeless. We will console ourselves by saying, "You can't change human nature," and seek some corner where we can lick our wounds and snatch a moment of fitful peace before our part in the drama is over. Spiritual exhaustion looms as a highly probable "jour- ney's end" for most of us who are now being shaken by fits of righteous and self-righteous fury. And the

newly born opportunity for reordering life and society will live for a while in the minds and through the efforts of a few of God's noblemen—and then die for lack of sympathetic understanding and sacrificial support among the rank and file of mankind.

We can all sympathize with the movie producer who telephoned Hendrik Van Loon, the author of the *History of Mankind,* that the first part of the story was all right, but he didn't like the way it came out. You will not expect me to break faith with facts so far as to seek to assure you that this tragedy of suffering will have a happy ending. There is no use sugar-coating the bitter fact that we neither know how it is going to come out nor have we any assurance that our most earnest efforts to secure a creative issue will meet with success. In literal truth, the sword of events reacheth unto the very soul of our hope, faith and courage for the future as well as the present.

NEW TASKS FOR THE CHURCHES

What, you ask, are the Christian churches doing to help us bear the burden of these days? "Not as much, I suppose, as they could and should be doing, but a lot more than the skeptics thought they would do"—is a fair answer to your query.

A thrill of joy ran through Christendom when the English churchmen met at Malvern last year to ponder the shape of things to come. Beginning with the unchallengeable assumption that "our greatest deficit is spiritual not material," they proceeded to outline a social and world order that was revolutionary in character and design. They were not trying to preserve capitalism, they were not trying to "save democracy" as such, they were not trying to preserve the British empire which they love; they were trying to think their way into the kind of society that would be *centered in human values,* for this alone is a truly Christian society. Basic thinking like that on the part of Christian leaders two hundred years ago might have done much to avert the tragedy of suffering which now hangs over us. We do not know how much good can come of it at this hour. But that, after all, is an irrelevant worry. The central fact is this: we are under obligation now to take seriously our task of presenting the Christian religion as a vital fact and factor in any civilization that can endure.

The Federal Council of Churches in this country has set out to make a thorough study of the basis of a just and endurable peace. During the past year the minds of more and more churchmen have been turned toward this fundamental task. They have declared with great emphasis that it is not the business of a Christian church to promote a war or to study ways and means of securing military victory. But it is the business of the church to keep men thinking about that more momentous task of understanding the meaning of a lasting peace.

Let this then be said: The Christian churches are facing the deepest and bitterest reality of this tragedy of suffering. Panaceas and utopias are out. The churches are meeting the shouts of war with prayers for peace. They are challenging the bitter misunderstandings among nations by renewed efforts for closer cooperation among religious bodies. In short, the Christian churches are struggling to keep alive their sense of being "one in Christ." We do this not from the fear that we stand or fall together, but from the age-old faith—too often hidden by ecclesiastical verbiage—that, in God's sight, we are one. And whoever thinks we are trying to meet hard facts with soft words ought to reread Christian history. When great Christian words like "love" and profound Christian practices like "forgiveness" come alive in Christian thought and living they become powers to be reckoned with.

THE ONE HOPE FOR THE WORLD

The efforts toward permanent peace, toward keeping alive a fellowship of faith in one another and all mankind, toward facing the future with the courage of

(Continued on page 261)

A Pastoral Prayer

By Ernest Fremont Tittle

ALMIGHTY GOD, our heavenly Father, who art ever with us and abundantly able to help us, grant unto us now, we beseech Thee, a blessed awareness of Thy presence. Quietly as evening comes, silently as stars appear, so may some vision of Thy glory be given unto us all.

As we are gathered in this holy place, may all who are weary and heavy-laden find rest; all who are lonely discover that they are not alone, but Thou art with them; all who have sinned and suffered find themselves healed by Thy mercy; all who are anxious for the morrow discover that their fears are giving way to faith and trust in Thee. And grant, O merciful God, that all who have suffered bereavement may find themselves supported by the hope of life eternal and everlasting and have some deep experience of that peace of God that passes all understanding.

Hear us, O Lord, as we pray for our country; that, turning to Thee with sincere desire to know and do Thy righteous will, this nation of our love and devotion may have a new birth of prosperity and freedom, justice and peace. And hear us, we most earnestly beseech Thee, as we pray for all the peoples of earth; that, involved in a common danger, they may now rise above their ancient fears, hates and selfishness, look unto Thee for guidance and help, and so find a way out of their present peril, keep faith with their noble dead, and secure for their children a more secure and ample life. All this we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Preaching From the Bible

By Halford E. Luccock

HIGH on any list of works of supererogation must be the undertaking of writing for ministers on the unending resources of the Bible for preaching. The preacher lives and moves and has what being he can manage in these days, in the Scriptures. There is as much need for recommending the Bible as there is for counseling people to take a breath once in a while.

Why, then, set out on a journey, even a short one, along such a well beaten road? One reason is that there is always a danger of underestimating the obvious, of taking it for granted, and allowing it to go into low visibility. That danger is glimpsed in Jesus' words, "You know these things, happy are you if you do them." Among the many kinds of courage a preacher needs is the courage of the obvious, the courage to consider the truth that has become an axiom, and thus grown unfogged. He needs to remember that a road is beaten down with much traveling it is so because it leads to a desirable destination. Remembering this, he will be fortified against spending his days on alluring detours of novelty which end up in a desert.

Another reason for emphasis on the Bible as a source of preaching is that we may easily overlook its amazing relevance to contemporary life and need. I do not know a better picture of this close relevance of the Bible than is found in the description of history given by a great American historian, Carl Becker. He says that the use of history is "to enlist the experience of mankind in the service of its destiny." Lift those words up to their largest possible meaning, and we have the Bible, the highest and deepest experience of mankind, to be enlisted by the devotion, the imagination and the skill of the preacher in the service of man's destiny.

I think I may say without immodesty that I have one authentic qualification for writing about biblical preaching. It is the same qualification which the Prodigal Son had for speaking about the pigpen, where he landed after wasting his substance in riotous living. I know something at first hand of the homiletical poverty of a preacher who has thrown the Bible out of the study window. I graduated from the theological seminary back in the bronze age; perhaps a better metallurgical term would be the age of brass. In those days quite a number of us young Apolloses on graduating, having become men, put away such childish things as texts and Bible stories. I, for one, in the pulpit, livid amid the immensities and starry galaxies. But after a while, when the little longsuffering congregation had heard my sermon on "The March of Progress" (for progress was marching in those days), and the one on "Science and Religion," and the one on "Pragmatism" (for pragmatism was

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going big then), like the Prodigal Son, I began to be in want. Then I came to myself and said, "In my father's Book are texts enough and to spare." And I said, "I will arise and go to the Bible."

I was not the only one with that experience. I found out, as many have, that when we put aside the Bible as the chief source of preaching, we have thrown away the most dramatic material possible; we have sold a great birthright for a mess of generalities; we have put away what, in Markham's words, has

The color of the ground, the red earth
The smack and tang of elemental things.

Four large things are true of preaching which finds its source in the Bible.

● *Dramatic Values of the Bible*

1. The Bible contains the most vivid, dramatic and arresting material the preacher or any public speaker can use. What an irony if, in the very days when the novelists such as Sholem Asch and Thomas Mann, and dramatists such as the authors of *Family Portrait* and Maxwell Anderson in *Journey to Jerusalem,* are demonstrating the inexhaustible power of the Bible narrative, the preacher should meekly hand over his heritage and wander off into the waste land of abstract generalities!

In *The Mill,* John Masefield's recent volume of reminiscences, the author shows the grip of the dramatic when he records that the workers in a carpet mill in Yonkers, New York, had no interest in the carpets they worked on unless they showed a particular design, such as a fox carrying off a bird. They cared nothing, he writes, "for festoons of blue roses in yellow baskets or big expensive kaleidescopes." The preacher had better note, for these words record a primary fact about mental attention. Audiences care little for verbal "festoons of blue roses." Bible stories give the saving grace of the concrete to the preacher's words. We may take a word of wisdom from Lewis Carroll and say that at eleven o'clock Sunday morning in the pulpit

The time has come
To speak of many things
Of ships and shoes and sealing wax
And cabbages and kings.

That is what people respond to, the concrete, specific; ships and shoes and sealing wax.

● *Preaching 'Great' Sermons Every Sunday*

2. Preaching from the Bible saves us from the futile strain of trying to preach a "great" sermon every Sunday. That has been a curse of the pulpit. The bondage of the tradition of the great oratorical sermon has slain tens of thousands of preachers from doing the vital service to the needs of people that might have been rendered. If we are living with the Bible we are able to forget the thunder of Niagara and the music of the spheres and speak in the vernacular of our home town. Jesus is the model for helpful preaching, devoid of straining ambition, when "he girded himself and took a towel" and stooped down to a bit of lowly service. If there is any future for preaching, it is in the human equivalent of that act. To lay aside our flowing robes, the rhetorical sins that do so easily beset us and so easily trip us up, and to bring some Christian truth in detail to a point of need—that is a service in which the Scripture helps us as nothing else can.

The snare of the consciously "great" sermon, depending for its effect on the noise of its detonation rather than on its aim or content, has never been more vividly put than by

John A. Rice, writing in *Harper's Magazine* of the preaching of his uncle, a Methodist bishop: "To listen to him was like quietly getting drunk. He led his hearers by easy stages into an unreal world of effortless peace, drugging them gradually into unconsciousness by the melody that was himself. They went home to eat their Sunday dinners in dazed silence, and remained befuddled until Monday morning, when they woke up and went about their business."

"And what good came of it at last?" quoth Little Peterkin. We may with some truth paraphrase familiar words and say of such a picture: "There, but for the grace of Jesus, Peter, Paul, Judas, Amos, Daniel, Moses and Jacob, go I!"

● *The Secret of Preaching That Endures*

3. Preaching through which runs a main stream of Bible narrative is the only kind that will last year after year in a pulpit. That may be an exaggeration, like many of my statements, but it is headed in the general direction of truth. We must do topical preaching, of course. But there are not enough contemporary topics to last one year, let alone five, unless the prophet and priest is content to dwindle down into an amateur news commentator.

Witness the appalling sameness of topics in college chapels during the last year! Most college audiences, when they discover that a preacher is talking about anything except "The Defense of Democracy," sigh with relief. We must do "life situation" preaching, of course. But even so good and basic a thing as that threatens to become a badly overworked cliché. Suppose a man preaches only sixty times a year. There aren't that many life situation rabbits to pull out of the silk hat every Sunday! More than that, the concentration on the endeavor to discover and list life situations and to compound an appropriate pill for each complaint, tends to make people viciously self-centered. It is also the easiest and most respectable way by which a preacher may evade the social and economic realities into which he must enter if he is to be true to his calling. Further, preaching from the Bible, which reaches its destination, a person, is life situation preaching.

To take some vivid word or incident, as it lives in the Bible record, forms an entering wedge into the mind of the hearer. Follow this wedge into some truth which spreads out into life, and the Bible will be an unfailing resource. This high usefulness of the Bible stories has been pictured with great beauty by Anne Morrow Lindbergh in her words: "Bible stories so simple that they are like empty cups for people to fill with their own experience and drink for their own need over and over again through the years."

Now we must guard against making this falsely simple. To take a vivid dramatic beginning in the Bible and make it lead into a living message to people living in this present world is a costly, painful job. It is not a task for a sleepwalker; it cannot be done by that lazy species of Bible paraphrase which often masquerades falsely under the name of expository preaching. We often hear a doleful lament over the passing of "expository preaching." As a tradition, it died for very good reasons. Much of it had paralysis, a weak heart and a clot on the brain. It is no wonder that senile decay set in. For the Bible, instead of being the servant of a living truth, often came between the congregation and the preacher. The means became the end. And the right comment on the wordy paraphases could well be expressed in the vulgar question—"So what?"

● *The Bible and Present-Day Problems*

4. The crux—really the clutch—of the whole thing is the contemporary parallel to the biblical word, or story. It was the absence of that clutch of the present-day parallel, which would mesh in with the machinery of mind and heart, which made so much alleged expository preaching irrelevant and obsolete. Let's put Orson Wells on the witness stand for a demonstration. We all remember the hysteria caused three or four years ago by his broadcast of a dramatization of H. G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds,* depicting an invasion from Mars. With realistic detail Mr. Wells broadcast pretended reports of dire calamities in Princeton, New Jersey, and Westchester county, New York. Many in New York fled the city and otherwise behaved like delirious grasshoppers. I thought at the time—"What a tribute to H. G. Wells!" Later H. G. Wells gave a disgruntled interview denouncing his young namesake, Orson Wells. He said that all the trouble came from Orson Wells' taking liberties with the story by moving its location. If he had left it in Brighton and London, no one would have been excited. But "by moving it to a close location, he got a nervous recation."

Those are words for a preacher to ponder well. When we leave the Bible stories in Palestine, all is well; the congregation can sleep safely and murmur, "Never touched me." It is when we move the Good Samaritan from the Jericho Road to Main Street, just around the corner, or move the Rich Fool from Judea to our own neighborhood in Nebraska or Texas, or move Judas into our own congregation, that the trouble begins. And that is when real preaching begins.

Of course, in drawing parallels to present-day life, we are on dangerous ground. We are in danger of reading back into the Bible narrative ideas and conceptions which are not there at all. We are in danger of doing unhistorical violence to the truth. Against that we should struggle with prayer and fasting. Philip Guedalla pictures this danger when he says that many historical parallels are "a display of impressive information by a faint similarity of widely separated events, and a common result is the distortion of two sets of facts, and the substitution of a common denominator of falsehood in the minds of a bewildered public." Looking closely at those words, I realize that they are a fair description of a good many of my sermons. From which, good Lord deliver us!

Nevertheless, if this drawing of parallels is on dangerous ground, it is on holy ground, where the records of man's experience of God, of God's self-disclosure, and his judgments in human history are made to walk our common streets.

What help may we find in working on this dangerous and holy ground?

● *The Habit of Reading the Bible*

The first and most is the preacher's cultivation of a lifelong habit of reading the Bible. That seems as much of a letdown into the commonplace as Elijah's telling Naaman to bathe in the Jordan as a means of salvation. It is literally the same prescription: Bathe in the Bible, swim in it, live in it. That continuous immersion in the Bible is a vastly different thing from the "last resort" use of the Bible which is the mechanical, standard practice of many preachers. This habit of reading the Bible, completely dissociated from whatever sermon or problem we are working on, sticking to it weekly though the heavens fall, is a vastly different thing from touring to it as a last resort—"when other helpers fail and comforts flee."

Most of us know, alas! that "last ditch" use of the Bible. Too often the Saturday night revels in the parsonage, as the zero hour for Sunday looms like the Day of Judgment (which it is), have followed the model in the 107th Psalm: "Their soul melteth away because of trouble. They reel to and fro like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble."

In other words, then the preacher reaches for the Bible!

As opposed to this, the fruitful reading of the Bible is a sort of brooding, not casual reading; rather it is watching history pass before one's mind, holding the mind loose,

th no tension or tautness at all, not orrying whether one finds anything not. The key point is that one is t working for a particular end. The nd and eye brood over the page like hawk over a chicken yard; then, om a leisurely wheel in the air, u swoop down on what looks like idea. You don't always get a live icken. Sometimes it turns out to merely a hole in the ground. Don't et about that. The chief thing is e habit, the procedure.

A better figure of speech is that of e process of using a hazel branch find water. The mind bends down places. That is the fascinating ystery of the Bible—we come across ings at places which are the beaten th of centuries, at words that are familiar as our own names, and t we see some truth and relationip we have never seen before.

● *Reading With a 'Double Eye'*

Again, *such brooding is done with a double eye,* with one idea on the story and the ideas, whether in Egypt or Samaria or Jerusalem or Corinth, and the other on Chicago or Jersey City or Fargo—if that is where you live. One eye on 1000 B.C. or 30 A.D., and the other on 1941. It is as though we were reading in double columns—as indeed we will be. Jesus said, "If your eye be single, the whole body shall be full of light." The minister may also say, "If your eyes be double, in this sense, your whole ministry will be full of light." For bridges will be thrown across the gulf of time and space, and spiritual traffic will pass over them.

Of course, it follows that a record must be kept of such harvest of the eye and mind. It may seem perverse, but it is usually true that the mind works must fruitfully when it is under no immediate and particular pressure. The insights which have come when we are freely working just for the sake of truth itself will have a vitality for particular sermons and occasions, perhaps six months or years later, that far surpasses the sermons produced by a frantic raid on an empty mental cupboard. (Some one ought to do a character sketch of the Reverend Mother Hubbard and the weekly Saturday night frustration!)

There is no more impressive demonstration of all this than in the ideas written down by Phillips Brooks in his seminary days, ideas which grew throught the years into the great and moving sermons of some twenty years later.

Christian Approach to This Tragedy of Suffering

(Continued from page 258)

ir deepest faith—these efforts call for the loyal suport of all who name the name of Jesus Christ. They nstitute the Christian approach to this tragedy of ffering. And when Christian churches appeal to men nd women like us to carry on in these undertakings ey are making their supreme effort to alter the tragic nding which is fast closing in on the drama of our ay. The Christian gospel is not man-made but it bemes intelligent, resourceful and desperately relevant nly insofar as persons neither wiser nor better than e are yield themselves to its transforming redeeming ower. When we waver at the very great probability at what we are trying to do will be tossed aside as relevant by an action-crazed world, we need to reind ourselves that "except a grain of wheat fall into e ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it ringeth forth much fruit."

When we are tempted to give it up in despair, we eed to remember that Christians before us have faced ith courage the "sunset of their civilization," and at we follow One of whom it has been truly said, He turned their sunsets into sunrises." When we umble, as stumble we will, through blindness, new ourage can come flooding in from the comradeship Him who came "feeding sunshine to the blind." here is no sword known to man that can sever this ith of ours in the living God—but it can be surendered.

Influence of the Bible

ONE of the highest tributes of modern times to the orth of the Bible as an educational and moral influce of incalculable value to the whole community me from the great scientist Huxley, who said: "Conder the great historical fact that for three centuries is book has been woven into the life of all that is oblest and best in our history, and that it has become the national epic of our race; that it is written in the noblest and purest English, and abounds in exquisite beauties of mere literary form; and finally, that it forbids the veriest hind, who never left his village, to be ignorant of the existence of other countries and other civilizations and of a great past, stretching back to the furthest limits of the oldest nations in the world."

The Bible has been the Magna Charta of the poor and of the oppressed. Down to modern times, no state has had a constitution in which the interests of the people are so largely taken into account; in which the duties, so much more than the privileges, of rulers are insisted upon, as that drawn up for Israel in Deuteronomy and Leviticus. Nowhere is the fundamental truth that the welfare of the state, in the long run, depends upon the righteousness of the citizen, so strongly laid down. The Bible is the most democratic book in the world.

Every thinking man realizes what the multitudes are prone to forget, that the teachings of the Bible are so interwoven in the whole civic and social fabric that it would be impossible to estimate what civic and social life in this country would be if these teachings were suppressed. It would mean the loss of all the standards by which both private and public morals are judged, all the standards by which, with more or less resolution, men endeavor to better themselves and their environment.—*The Labor Leader (Toronto)*

The Christian Century Pulpit would like to have its readers comment on the current series of articles on preaching and sermon-making, or on the sermons published, or on other departments of the paper. Reasonable space will be given for the publication of *brief* letters that are constructive and illuminating.

THE EDITORS.

• WHO'S WHO in THIS ISSUE •

REV. EDWIN MCNEILL POTEAT *was* a missionary in China from 1917 to 1929; he was associate professor of philosophy and ethics in the University of Shanghai during his last two years in China. Returning to America he was for two years pastor of the Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, Raleigh, N. C., and since 1937 has ministered at Euclid Avenue Baptist Church, Cleveland. He has published many books and is a poet of unusual gifts.

Rev. WALTER DUDLEY CAVERT *is secretary* of Christian education for the Synod of New York, with his headquarters at Syracuse. Before accepting this post he was for fifteen years minister of the First Presbyterian Church, Oswego, N. Y. Mr. Cavert has become known throughout his state because of his leadership in bringing churches together in larger parish units.

Since 1929 Rev. HAROLD L. PROPPE *has* been pastor of First Baptist Church, Hollywood, Calif. He received his B.D. at Northern Baptist Seminary, Chicago, his M.A. at Butler University, Indianapolis, and his Ph.D. at Southern Baptist Seminary, Louisville. He was the winner of the Intercollegiate Oratorical Contest, State of Oregon, in 1923.

Rev. VERE V. LOPER *was ordained in* the Congregational Church in 1919, having received his B.D. degree at Yale Divinity School. He has held pastorates at Great Barrington, Mass., Great Falls, Mont., Minneapolis, Minn., Wilmette, Ill., Denver, Colo., and since 1939 has ministered at First Congregational Church, Berkeley, Calif.

For the past twelve years Rev. DAVID K. BARNWELL has been minister of the First Baptist Church, Summit, N. J. He received his A.B. from the University of California and graduated from Union Theological Seminary in 1928.

For five years Rev. HAROLD A. BOSLEY was director of religious activities and teacher of philosophy and religion at Iowa State Teachers College, but since 1938 he has ministered at Mount Vernon Place Methodist Church in Baltimore, Md. His most recent book, *The Quest for Religious Certainty,* is recognized as a solid contribution to modern religious thinking. Dr. Bosley graduated from the Nebraska Wesleyan University and has his B.D. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Chicago.

Rev. ERNEST FREMONT TITTLE *is minister* of the First Methodist Church, Evanston, Ill.

Dr. HALFORD E. LUCCOCK *is professor* of homiletics at Yale Divinity School and author of *Acts of the Apostles in Present-Day Preaching* and many other books.

TITLES AND TEXTS — What Pulpit Readers are Preaching About

GEORGE WILLIAM BROWN, West Presbyterian, Binghamton, N. Y. "Examining Wartime Prosperity." Prov. 11:4—"Riches profit not in the day of wrath."

ELMER E. HOATS, Pilgrim Congregational, Lansing, Mich. "God's Defense Program." I Thess. 5:8, 9—"Let us . . . be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation."

M. A. FIGENSCHER, St. Paul's Methodist, Cleveland, O. "The Divine Appeasement." I John 2:1a—"He is the propitiation for our sins."

H. W. MCKINLEY, First Presbyterian, Beacon, N. Y. "Voices Calling Today." I Cor. 14:10—"There are . . . so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them without significance."

ROBERT HORTON, Rochester, N. Y. "The Christian's Defense Program." Psa. 62:6—"He only is my rock and my salvation: He is my defense; I shall not be moved."

FOR YOUR SERMON AND TEXT

. . . . . .
Title of sermon

. . . . . .
Text used (write out the text)

. . . . . .
Name of minister

. . . . . .
Name of church

. . . . . .
Address

W. R. TENNIS, Vanderburgh Presbyterian, Minneapolis, Minn. "Our Spiritual Priorities." Matt. 19:30—"But many shall be last that are first; and first that are last."

H. H. HAZENFIELD, First Evangelical, Indianapolis, Ind. "His Church in Our World." Matt. 16:18—". . . and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

C. E. MACARTNEY, First Presbyterian, Pittsburgh, Pa. "The Stars in Their Courses." Judges 5:20—"The stars in their courses fought against Sisera."

H. C. NOBLE, First Presbyterian, Downey, Cal. "High Gifts from Low People." Luke 22:26—"He that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve."

W. F. KOSMAN, Salem Reformed, Allentown, Pa. "The Eternal Christ." John 8:58—"Before Abraham was, I am."

L. W. HAUTER, First Presbyterian, Oelwein, Ia. "Faith and Morale." John 14:1—"Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God . . ."

FORBES ROBERTSON, First Presbyterian, Union City, Ind. "The Intention of Prevailing Prayer." Luke 18:41—"Lord, that I may receive my sight."

WILLIAM W. SAWIN, Calvary Baptist, Schenectady, N. Y. "The Pioneer of Spiritual Freedom." John 8:36—"If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

ALEXANDER G. SINCLAIR, First Baptist, Saskatoon, Sask., Can. "It Was God's Move." Acts 2:24—"But God raised him by checking the pangs of death. Death could not hold him." (Moffatt)

THE EDITOR'S PAGE

The Event of the Month

STEADILY, and with consummate skill, the Washington administration has pushed the nation to the very brink of war. Not in all our history has r government launched a policy so repugnant to the ll of the people and, by a cumulative sequence of executive commitments covering so long a period, finally weakened popular resistance to the point where patriotism itself now seems demand their acquiescence. Seen in detachment from e immeasurable consequences which will flow from s achievement, and disregarding its moral implicaons, the political skill of the President in manipulating e national will into helpless conformity with his rpose, assures him a place in history as the cleverest litician our country has produced. He has known nen to strike and when to desist, when to be urgent d when to be patient, what to do now and what to later, what to say, what to leave unsaid and what forget that he had said. For longer than two years e President has steered his course toward the involvent of the nation in war without making a single stake which the prestige of his high position could t easily absorb. Mr. Churchill's encomium upon s "consummate leadership" is fully deserved. The utrality law will probably be broken through by the ne these words are read. The fate of the nation will en be solely in the hands of the President. What cident may provide the decisive spark is not impornt. The important thing is that America's will to ace, her faith in her own independent destiny, her rennial hope of exercising her resources, her position d her peculiar gifts on behalf of peace and civilizaon, seem about to be thrown into a maelstrom of sanity from which will emerge God only knows what.

War Without a Declaration

The Book of the Month

OW WE MUST CHOOSE. *By Henry Nelson Wieman. The Macmillan Company, $2.00.*

THIS is not a war book, but a book on democracy. Yet its writing has been prompted by the war situation. The author sees democracy as the war s laid it bare to all eyes. Professor Wieman's dical analysis of our democracy brings him to the nclusion that the democratic peoples do not have a ith sufficient to sustain democracy and bring it to aturity. We fail because we believe only in democcy "as we run it." Democracy cannot live without profound commitment to God. But God, for Wieman, is evermore the Creator—not in the static sense having once for all made the world, but in the namic sense of working "even until now," as Jesus id. And God's highest working is his activity in the eation of human community. With this activity man ust cooperate, not on man's terms but on God's. This he can do only by self-commitment to the creative God. This commitment is not the same as moral idealism—commitment to "causes." Note this fine contrast between morality and religion: Moral goodness is a striving for the best; Religious goodness is a self-giving to that creativity which transforms us so that our best is transcended by a better which we could not have discerned prior to the transformation. To this high religion Professor Wieman calls all who cherish democracy, and he accompanies his call with the prophetic warning that such a sovereign faith is the only alternative to dictatorship and tyranny.

A Thought for the Month

IF one should say that the Christian faith is actually losing ground in the United States, he would at once become the target for a machine-gun fire of statistics which show that the denominations—nearly all of them—report numerical gains every year. But after this statistical ammunition was exhausted the spokesman of reality might be able to engage us in a calm facing of the fact that numerical advance is not an adequate criterion of Christian progress. It is quite possible that while the churches are getting stronger in numbers they are being outstripped by the growth of social forces and conditions which are the very antithesis of Christianity. That, I believe, is the actual fact in American society, and it has been true for a long time. Many lines of evidence could be introduced to substantiate this unpalatable truth. I wish to cite only one, but it is fundamental to all the rest. I refer to the neglect of Christian education, due to the exclusion of religion from the public schools. The result is that the very atmosphere of our culture is becoming secularized. The churches have turned over to the secular community the education of their children, and the community makes no place in its schools for any instruction in religion. Generation after generation of our youth is being delivered to society by the public school in a state of religious illiteracy. This situation lays upon the churches a task which they are not able to perform in the half-hour a week which they devote to Christian instruction. Unless religion can be included in public education there would seem to be no recourse for Protestantism save that which Roman Catholics long ago adopted, namely, the maintenance of schools of their own at their own expense. This would not only involve enormous costs which I do not think Protestantism is willing to pay, but it would sacrifice a great dream of American democracy. By neglecting religious education, secularism has been winning out. Only heroic measures by the Christian churches can recover their lost ground.

Is the Church Gaining?

Charles Clayton Morrison

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— Books for Preachers —

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